

Education Committee Public Hearing

March 17, 2010

Testimony of Joseph Bonitatebus to Support the Concussion Safety Act of 2010

My name is Joe Bonitatebus, thank you for your time. I would like to speak to you today about my experience with a brain injury.

The incident happened on March 9, 2008 while I was playing street hockey with my brother and his stick hit the bridge of my nose. About a half hour later, we realized I needed to go to the hospital once I started feeling symptoms, fearing that I had sustained a concussion. The diagnosis was a broken nose and a mild concussion, I was told I would be fine within the next couple of days and instructed to take some aspirin. For the next two weeks, I was unable to go to school due to the symptoms I was having, which were mainly pounding headaches.

After several doctor appointments to pediatricians, an ENT, and a neurologist, different procedures and different medications I was getting no better, maybe actually worse.

Finally, six weeks later we found the appropriate Dr because my mom spoke to another mom who told us where to go to seek help. Dr. Lee had me take the Impact test and then shut me down with a method called cocoon therapy that left me doing nothing. No school, friends, TV, video games, phone, texting, and obviously no sports. I missed the entire 4th quarter of sophomore year. I spent the summer making up my schoolwork with the help of tutors provided by my school. Due to my symptoms, my tutors had to actually read to me and write for me. Other symptoms left me wearing sunglasses in the house. I would wear gloves and socks due to side effects of my medicine.

After 4 months, in July I was feeling like I was almost cured, but then was hit again accidentally, exactly in the same spot, the bridge of my nose by my sisters' head. My symptoms immediately increased.

In September 2008, I went back to school with many accommodations and trips to the nurses' office. Since my symptoms were not going away in a reasonable timeframe, I underwent a series of blood work to rule out any other possible illnesses.

In April 2009, I was given a neurocognitive diagnostic evaluation to pinpoint specific affected areas and treatment recommendations.

Finally after almost two years to the date, I was considered recovered but still was advised to take caution with various activities and no contact sports since I still experience headaches.

I urge you to support RSB 456, because I have experienced the long-term effects of a concussion and this law will help reduce the number of people who have to go through what I have been through.